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WILDLIFE SERVICES—ILLINOIS

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USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Illinois

Every day, residents, industries, organizations, and agencies call on Illinois Wildlife Services (WS) for expertise in protecting agriculture, property, natural resources, and human health and safety from damage or threats posed by wildlife. Managed by professional wildlife biologists, WS responds with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

Illinois has a wide diversity of environments, from highly urbanized cities to agricultural areas. Wildlife are an integral part of these environments and a valuable natural resource. Illinois' position along the Mississippi Flyway, a major route for many migratory bird species, provides the opportunity for millions of birds to reside within the State. At times, the sheer volume of birds can create situations where conflicts occur.



Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this technical assistance can be provided over the phone. WS also provides on-site expertise, or direct assistance, to manage complex wildlife problems that require interagency cooperation or cannot be safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts scientific research across the Nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

Protecting Aviation Safety—Wildlife strikes with airplanes cost U.S. civil aviation more than \$470 million annually and pose a hazard to flight crews and passengers. From 1992 to 2000, more than 1,600 wildlife strikes, involving various mammals and bird species, including waterfowl (Canada geese and ducks) and raptors (hawks and owls), were reported to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) at Illinois airports.

WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) conducts research from its Sandusky, OH field station to reduce wildlife hazards to aircraft and the public. Studies are underway at several large airports around the country to evaluate habitat management practices and wildlife dispersal techniques. NWRC also maintains the National Wildlife Strike Database used by the FAA and airports to monitor

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting airline passengers and aircraft operations from wildlife hazards at airports
- Protecting public safety and property from Canada goose and white-tailed deer damage
- Protecting native vegetation and threatened and endangered species
- Protecting agricultural crops from bird damage
- Protecting public health and safety from threats caused by rabies, histoplasmosis, West Nile virus, and chronic wasting disease

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Illinois:

- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Managing bird predation to aquaculture facilities in the Southeastern United States
- Evaluating waterfowl as disease, parasite, and noxious weed reservoirs
- Controlling wildlife vectors of rabies, chronic wasting disease, and bovine tuberculosis
- Reducing goose damage through avian infertility

trends and wildlife species that pose the greatest concern to aviation.

WS biologists are working with airport officials at all major Chicago airports and regional airports around the State to manage wildlife populations in and around airfields. Strike rates caused by specific species have been greatly reduced through habitat manipulation, which makes the airports less attractive to wildlife. Additionally, more than 500 raptors have been captured and relocated anywhere from 50 to 200 miles away from Chicago's O'Hare and Midway airports. This effort to relocate raptors is part of a research project being conducted in cooperation with the FAA to determine the effectiveness of relocating these birds far from airport environments.

WS works with other airport managers and with the Illinois Department of Transportation to assess and resolve wildlife conflicts at airports throughout the State. In addition, wildlife hazard assessments are conducted that enable airport managers to identify potential wildlife threats to aircraft safety and identify various strategies to resolve these conflicts.

Protecting the Public from Wildlife-Borne Diseases—WS works with private industries throughout the State and with the Illinois Department of Public Health to alleviate disease threats to public health and safety. For example, when large concentrations of birds, such as European starlings, roost in an industrial site or neighborhood, environmental conditions may be created that support the development of a fungal disease called histoplasmosis. This disease can be transmitted to people exposed to the area and can cause severe respiratory problems. WS also assists with work to monitor for additional diseases, including rabies, West Nile virus, chronic wasting disease, leptospirosis, and E. coli. As part of this effort, WS provides assistance to alleviate public exposure concerns.

Protecting Agriculture and Agricultural Property—WS works with the agricultural industry to resolve conflicts caused by wildlife, including bird damage to crops, livestock, and feedlot operations. Damage is often local but can have significant impacts on producers in these areas. Birds can completely destroy a corn crop or spread disease in feedlots causing a significant drop in the milk production of dairy cows. WS works with the Illinois Department of Agriculture, the Illinois Farm Bureau, the Illinois Corngrowers Association, and USDA's Cooperative Extension Service to identify and resolve specified conflicts.



Looking to the Future

The scope of wildlife damage issues within Illinois continue to grow. One emerging conflict of great concern to producers in the State involves fish-eating birds causing damage and losses at fish-production facilities. Aquaculture is a new and emerging industry in Illinois. In addition to raising fish as an agricultural commodity, these facilities are also replenishing natural resources by raising stock fish for release in Illinois waters.

Wildlife diseases that are transmissible to humans and livestock are also a growing concern in Illinois. Diseases, such as West Nile virus and chronic wasting disease, have been receiving national attention and could impact public safety and agricultural production within Illinois. With the State being situated in a major migratory bird flyway, the Illinois Department of Public Health has requested assistance from WS in monitoring for potential diseases carried by these birds. Diseases spread from wildlife to livestock are already having an impact on the agricultural industries of nearby States and could cause similar concerns in Illinois.

Illinois Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators; such as producers; private individuals; businesses; and other Federal, State, and local government agencies who have a vested interest in the program. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.

